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Monday November 21, 2005

Local News

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Sunday, November 20, 2005

A day to adopt

Courts open doors to spread word about good things involved in adoption process
By KRISTA CHAMBERS | Staff writer

Tyler and Jeremy Wagenmaker of Zeeland Township sat on their couch Thursday, joking and laughing with each other, discussing what they would have for dinner that night.

"He always makes gloopy, cheesy stuff," Jeremy, 17, said, laughing. "I like my food to be in separate pieces."

The two aren't roommates or brothers, although some might mistake them for that. On Tuesday, Tyler Wagenmaker, 32, will legally adopt Jeremy as part of the state's Adoption Day at the 20th Circuit Court in Ottawa County.

"It's good to have it finalized, but in my mind I knew I would be here for years," said Jeremy, who met Tyler Wagenmaker in 2002. The elder Wagenmaker, who is unmarried, handled much of the adoption process while serving with the National Guard as a chaplain in Iraq. He is also the pastor of Beaverdam Christian Reformed Church.

The two will participate in the activities scheduled at the Ottawa County Court Adoption Day, intended to create awareness about the need for adoptive families in the county. Jeremy will deliver a speech at the event about the importance of adoption.

"I want to adopt when I'm able to have a house of my own," he said.

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TOGETHER: Jeremy, left, and Tyler, right, Wagenmaker will participate in National Adoption Day Tuesday when Tyler finalizes the adoption process of his son, Jeremy.

Sentinel/Krista Chambers

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RESTAURANT SPECIALS

During the county's adoption day, two judges will finalize eight adoptions for eight families, said Kevin Bowling, circuit court administrator for Ottawa County. Throughout the state, 30 counties will participate to finalize adoptions as well. Allegan County is participating as well.

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Normally these proceedings are closed to the public.

"There's so much that happens in the court system that is negative," Bowling said. "This is really one of those things that we need to highlight, tell people about and announce to the world."

The adoptions of the children, who range in age from infants to 17-year-old Jeremy, are open to the public on Wednesday. Court, state and officials said they hope those who are thinking about adoption will attend to see what happens during adoption hearings.

"For the young children being adopted, the judges do fun things with the kids," Bowling said. "The kids go up on the bench, the judges give the kids books and the parents will take pictures of kids with the judges. It can give the kids and parents a very different sense of the courts."

Diane Prisby, an adoption specialist from the Ottawa County Department of Human Services, said the day also raises awareness of the need for families to adopt older children.

"An event like this can broaden everyone's understanding of court adoption," Prisby said. "I think most people think about adoption of infants and cute little babies. There's a real need for families to adopt older children."

The adoption day celebration opening ceremonies will begin at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday at the Ottawa County Family Court in West Olive. Adoption confirmations will begin at 9:20 a.m.

Adoption Day

- * Tuesday
- * 8:30 a.m.
- * 20th Circuit Court, 12120 Fillmore St., West Olive
- * Judges will finalize eight adoptions for eight families at 9:20 a.m.

Contact Krista Chambers at krista.chambers@hollandsentinel.com or (616) 546-4258.



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